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"MY MOTHERLAND" SERIES XE. NO. 24

VITALITY FROM SLEEP

USEFUL HINTS

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VITALITY FROM SLEEP

USEFUL HINTS

Sleep is the best index of our health. Sound refreshing sleep is decisive evidence of good health. Disturbed or inadequate sleep or sleeplessness is an equally sure sign of ill-health ; and too much of sleep is as harmful as its absence and generally, the two defects are due to the same cause, a disturbance of the digestive organs.

If sound sleep is good for health, it is equally necessary for success in life. Absence of sleep leads to many mental conditions which are not conducive to success—chief of which is bad temper ; and it is also the case that one looks his best when he has good sleep.

Of all the factors that make for health, sleep is the most vital. For, let it be noted that only sleep, and nothing else, neither food nor exercise, restores our vitality.

How then is one to secure sound sleep? Before, however, we proceed to that question, let us dismiss one point—that of abnormal people. It is said that Napoleon could get on very well with only an hour's sleep. Similar stories are current in respect of Dr. Edison, the inventor. But in both the cases, as their own statements given below show, they did away with the normal period only in times of stress. When the experiment in which he was engaged was finished one way or other, Dr. Edison made up for the deficit by sleeping for longer intervals. Nor was Napoleon accustomed to forego his sleep when there was no need to dispense with it.

India has the most useful of such examples in Mahatma Gandhi. In periods of stress, as during his recent visit to

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England, he had only three to four hours of sleep on the average, except during week-ends, when he had his normal period of seven hours. At times, he had to get on with only an hour of sleep; and he did not have a break down of health in spite of such short periods of rest.

It will however be foolish to infer from these facts that an average individual can get on with less than six hours of sleep. Gandhiji, let us not overlook, is most abstemious in his eating. Hardly one in a thousand, lives on such spare diet even when forced by poverty. That was also the case with Dr. Edison, whose diet during periods of intense stress was extremely limited.

Here is another clue to the mystery of sleep. The less we eat, the briefer can be the duration of our sleep; and in Gandhiji's case, there are other super-normal factors. He is a Karmayogin and a Saint; and one of the most insistent warnings in Ayurveda is that such souls do not conform to rules intended for people in general.

The Chief Secret

Another extraordinary case may be here disposed of. There are some people who are refreshed even without the usual period of sleep if they are not otherwise disturbed. If they are left to themselves, that is adequate. They know the secret of mental and physical relaxation—and perhaps of meditation, so that even when they are not actually asleep, their mind and body get the rest they need.

It must be the endeavour of every seeker after health to have this power of relaxation; and it is twofold, physical and mental. Physically, you are to lie down in such a position that as few of your muscles as possible are in a state of tension. That is not easily learnt; but a sustained effort for a few days will easily put any one on the right track. Some hints, to achieve that end, will be found in later pages. The more important desideratum is the mental relaxation;

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and the easiest way to it is by self-surrender. Surrender yourself to the care of God and if God be too indefinite or incomprehensible a factor to you, think of your family or village deity to whom you are accustomed to look for succour whenever in distress. Or if perchance you have come under the influence of one like Sri Ramana Maharshi, you may surrender yourself entirely to his care. Mental surrender of that type is easily practised if one is in earnest and to the extent to which you succeed in that, the sounder and healthier will be your repose. It is of course a form of meditation; and if it developes as such, one is all the more fortunate.

Too Much Sleep

This mental and physical relaxation makes the best start to the problem of getting refreshing sleep; and if you go along this tract, the question of hours is almost automatically solved. You will wake up when your need for repose is satisfied and in normal persons, that period is six to seven hours, rarely longer. To one who goes to bed at about 9 p. m., which is the best hour for all who can afford it, it ought to be quite easy to get up between four and five in the morning. Every factor taken into consideration, 5 a. m. is the latest hour to wake up. The safest guides on this subject feel sure, that it is neither necessary nor healthy to sleep beyond that; but if one cannot go to sleep earlier than ten, he has no alternative but to get up later. But in the vast majority of cases, people are too long in their beds. Some occupy it even ten hours—though they may not be asleep all the time. It may be that they lie merely from indolence, or that they get sleep all through. Whatever the case, they are foolish. No one requires that length of sleep; and the extra period, instead of leading to one's health, actually undermines it, though he may not recognise it for the time being.

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Personal Experiences

Here are a few opinions on the interval of sleep.

I go to bed at nine o'clock every night and get up at six in the morning. I sleep about six hours, although I am in bed for nine hours—*Henry Ford.*

I want eight hours of dreamless, motionless sleep, and cannot do without it.—*H. G. Wells.*

Six hours sleep is more than enough for any man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.—*Napoleon.*

I am compelled by my wife to sleep six hours a day. I take it in two sections—first, four hours, then take two more.—*Edison.*

Sleep inspires me. Active brains need plenty of sleep, and its quality is as important as its quantity. Above all, sleep should be restful.—*Marconi.*

For Success in Life

The question is often asked:

Is there any connection between sleep and success?

Short sleep is not essential to success, but it may be a great aid.

Of two men mentally equal, the one who sleeps less will make more mark in the world, simply because he has more time in which to exercise his mind. From two to four hours extra work a day does not seem much, but in an average lifetime it totals between five and ten years. And extra work pays dividends.

Short sleep does, therefore, confer a material advantage on its adherents.

Misleading Conclusions

Those who pause to consider the connection of short sleep with greatness usually experiment with themselves. They

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find that after rising at 5 A.M. for three mornings in succession they become intolerably tired, and they arrive at the premature conclusion that either the great ones were freaks or their biographers liars. Neither conclusion is justified.

Only a lengthy experiment brings to light the secret of short sleep. The secret is that sleep is like food extract : it can be taken concentrated in a spoon or diluted in a cup, and its value to the system is exactly the same in either case.

Those who adhere to a programme of restricted sleep eventually find that their sleep gets heavier and heavier. In their four, five, or six hours they can obtain just as much rest as they previously could in eight or nine hours. Whereas the eight hour sleeper would be awakened by a distant rumble of thunder, the four-hour man would sleep right through a thunderstorm.

Obviously there is a limit beyond which sleep-shortening cannot be carried. The minimum period to which the human system will adjust itself varies with different individuals but no one can maintain maximum efficiency with less than four hours sleep.

Arrears Are Made Up

There is one other curious law of sleep which has an important bearing on the problem. Suppose a man whose minimum period is five hours decides to " make do" with four hours. His sleep account would show an adverse balance of an hour every day, and that balance would be carried forward with cumulative effect until more sleep becomes a necessity, when the arrears would be automatically wiped out.

This law explains the curious penchant of great men for taking short naps at odd moments. In actual practice it is difficult to determine one's minimum period, and short sleepers with drastic ideas often undercut their own minimum.

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Rather than disturb their rigid programme they use up unprofitable time by taking naps. In this way the adverse balance is squared.

Useful Experiments

An interesting sleep experiment was recently made with the help of a group of American students. The professor in charge of the experiment tested the effect of different periods of sleep from a number of aspects.

One of the functions of sleep is to rest the nerves, an important function in these days of strain. Nervous responses to a given stimulus were measured. No better result could be obtained than the one registered after four hours' sleep.

Co-ordination of nerves and muscles was also tested, and here again the four-hour period gave as good a result as any longer spell. Fatigue was tested by a colour-matching device and the result was so astonishing that it was checked several times, but the first conclusion that fatigue is fully vanquished after an hour's sleep, could not be shaken.

Recuperation of muscular energy was tested by a work-measuring machine. In this case, too, one hour of sleep gave a result equal to maximum.

The effect of sleep, on the brain was tested in two ways. The subjects were given a geometrical test, and the results were checked for both time and accuracy. Improvement in speed halted at the four-hour period, but accuracy continued to improve until the six-hour period was reached, after which it remained stationary.

It is clear from these data that no man needs more than six hours of sleep.

Look to Your Stomach

The commonest cause of excess of sleep is the disturbed state of one's digestive organs: and this excess may be accompanied, in some days, by absence of sleep as well. Too

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heavy eating, consequent indigestion and, when the digestive power is decreased, the inevitable constipation, constitute the chief danger. When sleep is disturbed, one's first attention must go to his food. It must be lightened in quantity and the more harmful of the ingredients must be abandoned. If that be done, relief is almost certain, though to begin with there may be even some discomfort. The patient will soon find that he can get on with fewer hours on bed and that he leaves it much refreshed. With the lightening of the diet, it is also necessary to see that at least two hours interval is given between the night meal and going to bed. This interval may be even lengthened.

If this correction in diet does not give adequate relief, one may turn to exercise. A brisk evening walk is desirable and in most cases quite necessary. It tones up one's system steadily, so that as days pass on, his health improves and with that, his sleep must give less cause for worry.

Posture in Sleep

Here are a few hints as to the position one should assume in bed—subject of course to the need for relaxation.

During the average eight hours in bed those who sleep soundly turn over but once or twice. It is therefore obvious that if one retains the same position for four or five hours on end, the muscles and tissues will gradually take that attitude as a permanent cast.

Many people sleep with one hand placed beneath the cheek. This is responsible for more wrinkles than is often realised.

Some cases of stooping shoulders can be traced to the use of a too high pillow. A person who habitually sleeps on the back with head bolstered high will not carry the head properly poised during the day.

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On the other hand, side sleeping on too high pillow hurts the neck and strains and elongates its muscles on one side, while cramping them on the other.

The tendency, especially during cold weather, to curl up into a C-shape when in bed must be checked. Lie mostly on the right side, with spine and legs stretched out straight.

The arm next to the bed may be bent in any comfortable position, but the hand must not be against any part of the face. The other arm may be extended on the side of the body. The head should rest on a fairly soft pillow just high enough to hold it in a normal position relative to the shoulders.

Sleeping conditions should be of the best. A lumpy mattress or an ill-ventilated room do not make for sound and healthy sleep.

Furnish the bedroom only with articles necessary for its comfort and avoid overcrowding it with collections, and, if possible, place the bed so that the sleeper gets plenty of air from the open window.

One Great Danger

We shall now proceed to those cases of actual distress, where an extra aid is found necessary for inducing sleep. And here the first and most important point to note is: Don't fall into the hands of drug fiends. Many will advise you that a small quantity of intoxicant will work wonders. To start with, it may seem so; but the danger is far greater. The dose will have to be steadily increased day by day until the person becomes a confirmed toper or a hopeless drug addict. Equally unwise it is to take even other "medicines" which have a devitalising effect. For, the endeavour of the patient must be to strengthen his powers and see that they function properly and not deaden them.

And it is not necessary to resort to such harmful aids at all. Many effective remedies are available for securing

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sleep which leave no harmful reaction whatever. Quite a common one is to drink of cup of warm water. For instance, when the absense of sleep is unusual, due, say, to the drinking of coffee or tea in the afternoon to which he is not accustomed, a cup af hot water at ten or eleven in the night acts very well.

Harmless Relief

Here are a few other methods of treatment which are equally usuful and entirely unobjectionable.

A warm bath at bedtime is helpful. Where there are facilities for complete immersion, the effect is better. Immerse yourself in warm water upto the neck for a fairly long time until you feel shivering or any other discomfort. Then rub the body dry and go to bed well covered up to the face.

A cold bath for the feet up to the angles is also helpful The water may be as cold as you can bear and when you keep your legs in the water wrap up the rest of your body.

Deep breathing is very effective as a sleep inducer if you can get into the habit—*i. e*, avoid the conscious effort. If you have to put in special effort for the same, there will be no inducement to sleep, though such deep breathing is good by itself for general health.

Effective Baths

Where these are not adequate, the patient should resort to special baths that have been dealt with in the earlier Pamphlet (No. 23.)

Speaking from his own experiences, Gandhiji says :

In cases of sleeplessness, instant relief is often obtained by sleeping in the open air after a steam bath followed by a cold bath.

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The abdominal bath is effective equally for sleeplessness as well as drowsiness. It induces sleep where there is not it induces vigour where the complaint is drowsiness.

Lime is Useful

Where however, the patient is unwilling to resort to these natural methods of treatment, the following treatment is advised by the Sadhu Physician of Saraswati Sangam:

"Take juice of two good sized lime fruits and mix with half a pint of water and drink early morning. Repeat this three or four times a day. If necessary, rub the head constantly with lime juice.

"Remove coffee, tea and stimulating spices from the diet. Prefer cooling raw vegetables to cooked, hot and stimulant food.

"You will dig your own grave if you take to the drug habit for sleeplessness. Note that every kind of sleep inducing drug is poisonous. It weakens the heart and the whole nervous system. It induces a bad habit which is worse than sleeplessness itself."

In mild cases, rubbing of the head with breast milk or almond oil proves efficacious and among the medicated oils Bringamalaka is the most useful for sleep, provided it is rightly prepared.

Cause of Bad Sleep

Relief will be prompt if one can find out what the cause of the trouble is and unfortunately the causes are very many. It is when the mind is worried that one has no sound sleep. People who are of irritable temper do generally suffer from this ailment. Drinks like cocoa, tea, coffee, alcohol, excessive meat-eating, over-activity of the brain. indigestion, use of tobacco, ganja, constipation growth in the brain and nerves cause loss of sleep. Most of the chronic diseases like heart diseases, asthma, consumption, syphilitic growths or all acute fevers

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also give rise to sleeplessness. In almost all the mental disorders as a result of worry and sudden detachment from anything that was felt to be dearest, insomnia is common.

For a watchful person, it should not be difficult to make out which of these causes are operating in his case. And mental factors must be noted as much as physical. Freedom from anger, worry of passion is essential. And towards that end, one must improve his outlook on life. His attachments for wordly things must decrease and his aspirations must be generally improved.

In respect of physical conditions, he should devote more attention to healthy living. He should have only non-stimulant and antibilious food, stop all condiments: completely live on easily digestible conjee or fruit diet.

Persons with sleep trouble must invariably avoid coffee, tea and all stimulating drinks. In their place they can have cold water drink or diluted lime juice drink. Cold water baths both morning and evening for at least 15 minutes are advisable.

In extreme cases, such as sleeplessness in acute fevers or debilitated patients, other methods will have to be applied according to the condition of the particular case. In such cases experienced doctors should be consulted.

The fight for sleep is a fight for health. For, where there is good sleep, there is no disease and where there is disease, there can be no good sleep. Disease is poison in the system and that poison cannot but affect the mind as well: so that it is safe to conclude that the sure sign of one's enjoying sound sleep is a constant cheerfulness of temper: and that takes you far in winning the battle of life.

WHEN FOOD IS POISON

"You must eat to keep up your strength" is the general idea everywhere.

And if you are weak most people believe you are not eating enough. You should eat more to build up your strength.

Because of this misconception, many people remain weaklings all their lives.

The close connection between the eating and the digestion and assimilation of foods is rarely considered.

The mere presence of food in the stomach does not insure its absorption into the system. There must be the need for and ability to digest nourishment.

Food passed into the stomach when it is not ready to digest it, often turns into poison. It is foreign matter that the system has to eliminate.

And not infrequently this foreign matter ferments until it becomes putrid and then these poisons are absorbed into the tissues of the body and circulated through its every part.

It is under such circumstances that doctors speak of auto-intoxication, blood poisoning.

It comes from the alimentary canal and often it is just as deadly as if it were strychnine or other violent chemical poisoning.

You can well imagine what happens to an ailing person at such times.

The whole body is weakened, the vitality is low, there is no appetite, no desire for food, but the invalid is tempted with all sorts of savoury dishes.

"Something nice for the poor fellow to eat," is often the idea of the relations. And he is often poisoned beyond recall by eating foods under such circumstances.

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Feeding the sick is a dangerous experiment at all times.

When a doctor has failed to learn the fundamental principles of diet, every meal that he gives a sick man is a rash experiment. It may turn to poison and cause death.

Literally, millions of people have gone to a premature end through mistakes of this kind.

Whether sick or well, food should never be taken without an appetite, without the ability to enjoy it. And this appetite is more especially essential if one is ailing.

Eating to keep up your strength is commendable when the stomach is craving additional nourishment, when it can digest and absorb the essential element from the food that is eaten.

At all other times food is foreign matter. It sometimes becomes not unlike violent poisons.

The importance of dietetic knowledge when feeding the sick is paramount. It may mean the difference between weakness and strength, life and death.

But remember that foods must be palatable.

The ability to enjoy them clearly indicates that nourishment is really needed by the organism.

HEALTH HINTS BY A PHYSICIAN

At Meal Times

Although it is hardly polite to read while eating with others, when you are alone the habit has something to recommend it.

When you are occupied in conversation, you are less likely to eat quickly—unless, of course, you have been talking so much that you have to hurry to catch up with the others.

Reading at meal times has this effect—it makes you eat more slowly. Hurrying over food is a common cause of

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indigestion, because the food is not properly mixed with saliva.

The first part of digestion takes place in the mouth, and the same process is carried a stage farther in the stomach. The main reason for chewing is to mix the food thoroughly with saliva.

Foodstuffs lying unchewed in the stomach can never be properly prepared for the later stages in its digestion, which takes place in the upper part of the small intestine. Eat slowly if you want to avoid one cause of dyspepsia.

That Headache

Headaches after reading are a sure sign that the eyesight is deficient. You may have perfect vision for distant objects and yet require glasses for reading.

A bad light is also a cause of eye trouble and strain, and a glaring light on the paper or book makes matters worse. Place your chair so that the light falls over one shoulder from behind.

"Filmy" vision, red rims, and, often, inflammation of the eyes, may result from strain. The headaches which follow are due to over-straining the little muscles in an attempt to focus objects clearly. The eyes feel burning and often water.

After Work

Tiredness after a hard day's work in office or factory is not always the result of physical effort. It often follows a kind of blood poisoning.

Sedentary work leaves two of the excretory organs—the lungs and the skin, through which the great proportion of waste products is disposed of—with very little to do.

When these waste products accumulate in the blood-stream to a greater extent than normal, headaches, lassitude, and a lack of power to concentrate result. The sufferer wants only to sit down and go to sleep when he returns from work.

It would be much better for him if he took some strenuous exercise instead of flopping into an arm-chair. A good sharp walk would completely restore normal health and temper.

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